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Received Washington CommGen
10:13 A.M. EDT Monday 2 Sept 1968

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10:35 A.M. CDT Monday 2 Sept 1968

EEA477
OO WTE10
DE WTE 3647

FROM WALT ROSTOW
TO THE PRESIDENT
CITE CAP82344

~~SECRET~~

SEPTEMBER 2, 1968

I BELIEVE YOU WILL WISH TO READ THIS THOUGHTFUL
ANALYSIS OF LODGE FROM BONN AS BACKGROUND TO NSC
MEETING ON WEDNESDAY.

NSJ 94-197 (#106)
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copy/

BONN 16317

SUBJ: WESTERN ACTION ON SOVIET INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. AS SEEN FROM BONN, THE SOVIET INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS NOT ONLY STARTLED BUT ALSO GENUINELY FRIGHTENED MANY GERMANS. THE APPEARANCE OF SOVIET FORCES ON THE BAVARIAN BORDER IS DISTURBING. ALTHOUGH NEARLY ALL GERMAN LEADERS HAVE COMPLETELY REJECTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A SOVIET INVASION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, THE NIGHTLY SIGHT OF SOVIET TANKS IN PRAGUE ON GERMAN TELEVISION SCREENS AT THE HEIGHT OF THE CRISIS AND THE CONVERSION OF THE "SOFT" CZECH-FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY BORDER INTO A "MILITARY CURTAIN" HAS ACTIVATED OLD FEARS.

2. HELMUT SCHMIDT HAS TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS HIS FIRST CONCERN IN FORMULATING THE SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC PARTY REACTION TO THE INVASION WAS TO FIND MEASURES WHICH WOULD HEAD OFF DEEP POPULAR UNREST. IN HIS BRIEFING TO THE BUNDESTAG FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AUGUST 26, KIESINGER SPOKE OF THE INVASION AS HAVING CAUSED A CHANGE IN THE BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE. HE ALSO SPOKE OF ALARMING INDICATIONS OF A HITHERTO DISCOUNTED ELEMENT OF IRRATIONALITY IN SOVIET DECISION MAKING. RUETE AND SAHM, BOTH EXCEPTIONALLY CALM PROFESSIONALS, HAVE RAISED THESE ASPECTS IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH US.

3. IN THIS SITUATION, KIESINGER'S SUDDEN GRASP FOR A NATO SUMMIT MEETING WAS VIRTUALLY A REFLEX REACTION. BY "NATO", HE OF COURSE MEANT THE U.S. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE PLEASED THAT THIS IS SO AND THAT WE SHOULD BE GLAD THAT THE GERMANS AUTOMATICALLY CRY OUT TO US FOR HELP WHEN THEY ARE IN DIFFICULTIES. IF IT WERE OTHERWISE, THE BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE MIGHT INDEED BE DIFFERENT.

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4. OSVIOUSLY, THERE MUST BE A REACTION FROM US. THE GERMANS MUST NOT HAVE REASON TO THINK THAT WE FAIL THEM IN MOMENTS OF HIGHEST STRESS. EMOTIONAL OR EXAGGERATED AS THE GERMAN REACTION TO THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN INVASION MAY APPEAR TO US, IT EXISTS AND IT IS REAL. IF IT IS NOT DEALT WITH, SEVERE DISILLUSIONMENT WILL SET IN, TOGETHER WITH A TREND TOWARD GRADUAL EXTINCTION OF THE REFLEX REACTION OF TURNING TO THE ALLIANCE.

5. INTELLECTUALLY, THE GERMANS REALIZE WE HAVE MANY PREOCCUPATIONS -- ELECTIONS, INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND VIETNAM. BUT EMOTIONALLY, THEY CANNOT GRASP WHY WE DO NOT DO MORE TO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP IN THE CZECH SITUATION. SAHM'S PLAINTIVE REMARK TO EMBROFF THAT THE GERMANS HAVE TRIED A NATO SUMMIT, THEY HAVE TRIED WEU AND THEY HAVE TRIED EEC, ALL IN VAIN, AND WHERE IS THE WEST, INDICATES DEPTH OF FEELING IN A NORMALLY PHLEGMATIC INDIVIDUAL. SEEN FROM HERE, DE GAULLE HAS FAILED THE GERMANS AT A TIME OF NEED AND THIS MAY BE A VALUABLE LESSON FOR THEM.

6. GERMAN POLITICAL LEADERS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH THIS INITIAL PHASE OF EXCITEMENT. THROUGH A PECULIAR COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY ARE FOR THE FIRST TIME PRETTY MUCH ON THEIR OWN IN A SITUATION OF FIRST IMPORTANCE CONCERNING THE SOVIET UNION AND THEIR SECURITY. THE ENSUING SITUATION COULD BE A CHALLENGE TO THEM TO EXERT LEADERSHIP IN EUROPE AND TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE TOWARD COMMON EUROPEAN ACTION ON DEFENSE AND POLITICAL COORDINATION.

7. BUT THIS IS A ROLE GERMAN LEADERS ARE MOST RELUCTANT TO ASSUME. THE FACT THAT KIESINGER IS A CONCILIATOR RATHER THAN A STRONG LEADER, KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR OWN PAST AND OF THE CRITICISM THEY WILL INCUR FROM THEIR ALLIES IF THEY TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND REMAIN ISOLATED, ALL RESULT IN POWERFUL INHIBITIONS WHICH MAKE IT UNCERTAIN THAT THEY WILL FACE UP TO THE CHALLENGE. WE SHOULD HELP THEM TO MOVE TOWARDS THE BEGINNING OF A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN EUROPE WHICH NO NATION HAS SHOWN IN RECENT YEARS; WE SHOULD ALSO HELP THEM, BECAUSE IF THEY FAIL TO MEET THE CHALLENGE, THEY WILL WITH HUMAN PREDICTABILITY TAKE OUT THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT ON US.

8. AT PRESENT THE THOUGHTFUL GERMAN SADLY RECOGNIZES THAT AS OSTERHELD SAID THERE HAS BEEN "NO COMMON ACTION, NOT EVEN A COMMON STATEMENT... ONLY PETTY BICKERING WITHIN THE WEST" AND HE BELIEVES GERMANY SHARES THE SHAME. BUT LESS THOUGHTFUL GERMANS ARE ALREADY SAYING THAT WE CARE MORE FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS THAN WE DO OUR RELATIONS WITH FRG FORGETTING FOR THE MOMENT THAT A WAR BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE SOVIETS WOULD BE A DISASTER NOT ONLY FOR THE IMMEDIATE PARTICIPANTS BUT FOR GERMANY TOO.

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9. THE CONSIDERATIONS LISTED IN PARAS 1 TO 8 PERSUADE ME OF THE NEED TO LOOK FOR STEPS WHICH WE COULD TAKE WHICH WOULD RESPOND TO THE ABOVE FEELING AND NOURISH OUR ALLIANCE. OUR COMMITMENTS TO GERMANY ARE, I BELIEVE, CLEARLY SPELLED OUT. WE NEED TO REINFORCE THE FEELING HERE THAT THESE COMMITMENTS BIND US NOT ONLY LEGALLY OR TEXTUALLY, BUT IN OUR MINDS AND IN OUR DEEPER FEELINGS.

10. OF THE VARIOUS STEPS WHICH COULD BE TAKEN TO MEET THE PRESENT SITUATION, THE BEST FOR THE LONGER RUN IS PROBABLY A WESTERN SUMMIT MEETING UNDER NATO OR OTHER GUISE.

11. OTHER STEPS WHICH MIGHT BE TAKEN ARE:

A. TO CALL ME BACK TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR CONSULTATIONS. THIS IS A CONVENTIONAL BUT USEFUL WAY OF UNDERLINING CONCERN AND INTEREST.

B. TO INVITE KIESINGER, AS THE LEADER OF NATO COUNTRY MOST AFFECTED BY SOVIET MOVES, TO WASHINGTON IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE COULD STOP IN LONDON ON THE WAY BACK, BUT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO STOP IN PARIS BECAUSE DE GAULLE PLANS A VISIT HERE SEPT 27-28; KIESINGER HAS PLANNED A TRIP TO TURKEY, IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN BETWEEN SEPT 5-15; AT PRESENT, HE APPEARS TO INTEND TO PRECEED WITH IT.

C. TO CONVENE A NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING, TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE THIS SHOULD BE IN SEPTEMBER.

D. TO PRECEDE THE NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP MEETING PLANNED FOR OCTOBER WITH A MEETING OF ALL NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS, AND THEN FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY WITH THE NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP.

12. THIS SEQUENCE MIGHT CULMINATE IN SUMMIT THROUGH MAKING THE DECEMBER NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL MEETING A MEETING OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT.

13. OTHER POSSIBILITIES ARE:

A. IF CURRENT STATE OF OPINION MAKES IT FEASIBLE, A U.S. SENATE RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THE NEED FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALLIANCE FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE AND AFFIRMING THE U.S. INTENTION TO MAINTAIN PRESENT TROOP LEVELS IN EUROPE. THIS MIGHT BE TIED TO THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET FORCES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. ALTERNATELY, IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE IF SENATORS, IN ADDITION TO SENATOR MANSFIELD, WHO HAVE HITHERTO BEEN KNOWN AS ADVOCATES OF U.S. TROOP REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE, WOULD MAKE STRONG STATEMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE U.S. MILITARY COMMITMENT OF THIS CONTINENT.

B. VISITS TO EUROPE AND GERMANY BY AS MANY HIGH-LEVEL U.S. POLITICAL FIGURES AS POSSIBLE. A VISIT TO BERLIN BY THE FUTURE PRESIDENT-ELECT WOULD HAVE GREAT MERIT.

C. IT WILL OF COURSE NOW BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER FOR THE TRAINING EXERCISE SCHEDULED TO BRING BACK TROOPS WITHDRAWN UNDER ROTATION PROGRAM TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED IN JANUARY 1968 AND NOT BE DELAYED.

D. A STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT ON BERLIN, AS SUGGESTED EARLIER.

E. U.S. LEADERSHIP IN NATO ON THE VARIOUS PROJECTS ALREADY UNDER WAY DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE ALLIANCE, AS REPORTED BY USNATO.

14. IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT ALL OF THE MEETINGS PROPOSED ABOVE HAVE AN IMMEDIATE AND CONCRETE OUTCOME. THEIR IMMEDIATE PURPOSE SHOULD BE AS POLITICAL ACTS OF SOLIDARITY WITH REASSURING PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT. THE SUBSTANTIVE AIM SHOULD BE TO WORK TOWARD HOLDING THE NATO TROOP FIGURE WHERE IT IS; ACHIEVING LIMITED INCREASES WHERE POSSIBLE IN DEFENSE BUDGETS; AND WHERE POSSIBLE, INCREASED PRACTICAL COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH MILITARY. SUCH ACTIONS CAN AND SHOULD BE TAKEN WITHOUT REVERSION TO THE HARSH VOCABULARY OF THE COLD WAR: WE SHOULD SAY THAT WE ARE NOW REQUIRED BY CIRCUMSTANCES TO GIVE DEFENSE AT LEAST AS MUCH PRIORITY AS RELAXATION OF TENSIONS.

15. OUR MAIN OBJECTIVES IN DEALING WITH THE GERMANS SHOULD BE TO BRING THEM TO TAKE RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP AMONG THE EUROPEANS BOTH AS REGARDS DEFENSE AND PROGRESS TOWARD EUROPEAN INTEGRATION. ON THE FIRST, WE MIGHT EXPECT THEM TO MAKE SOME INCREASE IN THEIR DEFENSE BUDGET. ON THE SECOND, FOR THEM TO ATTEMPT, WITH THE HELP OF COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES OTHER THAN FRANCE TO DEVELOP CLOSER COLLABORATION WITH BRITAIN IN THE DEFENSE FIELD AND MOVE TOWARD MARKET MEMBERSHIP FOR BRITAIN. I BELIEVE THAT SOVIET ACTIONS MAY HAVE CREATED A NEW OPENING FOR MOVEMENT IN EUROPE WHICH SHOULD BE USED SOON. LODGE.

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